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Food Stamp Facts..

Recipient Responsibility



The Food Stamp Program enables low-income households to buy more food of greater variety to improve their diets. Participants pay a small sum of money—the amount based on family size and net monthly income—and receive a larger value of food stamps, which can be spent like money in participating food stores.

To qualify for food stamp benefits, households must meet certain nationwide eligibility requirements such as income standards and work registration. Except in special circumstances, food stamp households must be able to prepare meals. The head of each recipient household, or his representative, has certain responsibilities including reporting changes in income of more than \$25, changes in deductions of more than \$25, and any other changes in household status which may occur within a certification period. The following questions and answers outline some of these responsibilities:

1. WHY SHOULD ANY CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD STATUS BE REPORTED?

In many cases, the reporting of changes in household status may benefit the household. For example: If a household increases in size, it will be entitled to more food stamps. If the household income becomes less, the purchase requirement (payment for food stamp allotment) will also be less. Failure to report certain changes may cause the household to be dropped from the program. In some cases, the head of the household may be subject to penalties under the law.

2. WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW SHOULD THESE CHANGES BE REPORTED?

All changes in income or deductions of more than \$25 and any other changes in household status must be reported to the local welfare or food stamp office within 10 days of the changes. The head of the household—or his authorized representative—can report changes by mail, telephone, or in person.

3. WHAT IS A 60-DAY CONTINUATION OF CERTIFICATION?

When a household intends to move to another food stamp project area, the head of the household should notify the certification office. If the household composition has not changed at the time of the move, certification will continue for 60 days in the new area.

4. HOW IS THIS DONE?

First, the household will surrender any "Authorization to Purchase" cards (the document households get when certified for participation, commonly called ATP cards) which it does not intend to use before the move. The certification worker will complete a transfer form and advise the head of the household that he must report to the food stamp office in his new area to obtain an ID card and the amount of stamps authorized on the transfer form. If the household wishes to continue receiving food stamps, a request for certification must be made in the new area.

5. IS IT ILLEGAL TO SELL ATP CARDS OR FOOD STAMPS?

Yes. Food stamps and ATP cards are obligations of the United States. Unauthorized issuance and misuse of these obligations can result in severe penalties under Title 18 of the U.S. Code.

6. WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES?

It is against the law to knowingly use, transfer, acquire, change, or possess food stamps or ATP cards in any way not authorized by the Food Stamp Act or regulations. If the cards or stamps are worth \$100 or more, the person can be charged with a felony, and if found guilty he may receive a fine of up to \$10,000 or be jailed for up to 5 years, or both. If the value of the ATP cards or stamps is less than \$100, the person can be found guilty of a misdemeanor and can be fined up to \$5,000 or jailed for up to 1 year, or both.

7. CAN PERSONS USE STAMPS OBTAINED THROUGH A TRADE OR SALE OF PROPERTY?

No. Anyone who uses food stamps as payment in a grocery store or deposits them in a bank when he knowingly received them in a way that is against the Act or regulations is subject to the penalties outlined in question six.

8. WHAT OBLIGATIONS DOES A HOUSEHOLD HAVE FOR MEETING THE WORK REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT?

All able-bodied adults, with certain exceptions, must register for work in order to obtain food stamps. The registrant must also:

- Report for an interview at the Employment Service upon request
- Answer requests from the Employment Service for extra information
- Report to an employer to whom he has been referred by the Employment Service
- Accept an offer of suitable employment
- Continue suitable employment once accepted.

Any food stamp participant may request a fair hearing if he feels a decision regarding his participation has been unfair. Each household should be informed of its right to a fair hearing at the time of application. The standards for participation in the Food Stamp Program are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, sex, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs.

FOR FULL AND COMPLETE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FOOD STAMP CERTIFICATION OR WELFARE OFFICE

The Food Stamp Facts series include:

- Allotments and Purchase Requirements (FNS-70)
- Work Registration (FNS-71)
- Eligibility Requirements (FNS-72)
- Fair Hearing (FNS-73)
- Household Income Deductions (FNS-74)
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- Disaster Situations (FNS-99)